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LIFE ECO COMPATÍVEL

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Abstract:

LIFE ECO COMPATÍVEL project (LIFE09 INF/PT/000045) was developed by the Madeira Natural Park Service (SPNM) – Regional Secretariat for the Environment and Natural Resources, in partnership with the Portuguese Society for the Study of Birds (SPEA). The main objective of this project was to promote and reinforce the compatibility between the development of socio-economic and cultural activities, such as fishing, agriculture, and nature tourism, with the management of Natural Reserves. These are classified areas, habitats, and species listed in the annexes of the directives that support the Natura 2000 Network. The main objective of this case is to describe the project and its managerial and marketing responsible approach.

Resumo:

O projeto LIFE ECO COMPATÍVEL (LIFE09 INF/PT/000045) foi desenvolvido pelo Serviço do Parque Natural da Madeira (SPNM) – Secretaria Regional do Ambiente e dos Recursos Naturais, em parceria com a Sociedade Portuguesa para o Estudo das Aves (SPEA). O principal objetivo deste projeto foi promover e reforçar a compatibilização entre o desenvolvimento de atividades socioeconómicas e culturais, como a pesca, a agricultura e o turismo de natureza, com a gestão de Reservas Naturais. São áreas classificadas, habitats e espécies constantes dos anexos das diretivas que suportam a Rede Natura 2000. O principal objetivo deste caso é descrever o projeto e sua abordagem responsável de gestão e marketing.

1. INTRODUCTION

Since Madeira was discovered in 1419 by Tristão Vaz Teixeira, Bartolomeu Perestrelo and João Gonçalves Zarco, Madeira was always visited by foreigners from various locations to treat their illnesses, observe nature or even relax in a calm destination, those were one of the strengths of Madeira. Nowadays, Madeira is visited largely by the British and Germans because most of them want a quiet and calm place to stay and avoid the big cities where they normally live.

The Archipelago of Madeira is a destination recognized by its nature, in Portugal. Madeira is part of Macaronesia. Macaronesia is a region that has a natural heritage of high importance for the scientific field. The indigenous forest of Madeira “Laurissilva” was recognized by UNESCO in 1998 as a World Natural Heritage. Madeira has the biggest portion of the biogeographic region of Macaronesia (Portugal, n.d).

In 1982, the Madeira Natural Park was created to safeguard the rich heritage of this area. It was classified as a Biogenetic Reserve, a classification only used for a place with high importance. This Biogenetic Reserve has a high natural value and is a relic recognized worldwide. This Reserve is home to some rare species at risk of extinction. The best way to visit the Park is by foot, following the network or recommended routes dominated by PR (Visit Portugal, 2022).

In the 21st century, it was needed to have a new and updated plan for various parts of Madeira since new concepts were appearing with a lot of weight in the international community. It was concepts like Sustainable Tourism, Green Marketing, and increased awareness towards nature that the Natura 2000 project came to be.

During the early 2000s, it was devised a plan called Natura 2000 and this plan had the objective of conglomerating various projects connected to Nature. Natura 2000 was adapted to the reality of Madeira dividing the region into various zones to make it easier to study and manage. Even though the Natura 2000 is a project created in the early 2000s it is still to date being revised and adapted to the reality of Madeira. The Life Eco Compatível project was part of the Natura 2000 and was included in a strategy of the European Community for communication and information (Serviço do Parque Natural da Madeira, 2022).

The project envisioned various actions to promote and reinforce compatibility between the development of socio-economic and cultural activities in various sectors to protect the growth of the locals and at the same time the tourism sector.

The project, it is listed various areas for marketing management. To develop marketing communication campaigns addressed to the different target groups was undertaken in partnership with SPEA (Portuguese Society for the research of the birds) and with the support of various stakeholders to encourage the most compatible behaviors in their activity from an ecological point of view.

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Within the campaigns, materials were distributed to raise awareness, aiming at a personal commitment, individual to individual, in favor of the conservation of biodiversity and, at the same time, improving the quality of life and economic growth (IFCN, 2022).

The main objective of this case is to describe the project and its managerial and marketing responsible approach.

2. CASE DEVELOPMENT

One of the most important issues affecting the tourist industry in recent years is sustainable tourism. Tourism is increasingly being used as an economic development tool by many third-world countries, thereby helping to generate employment as well as improve the local infrastructure (Meler & Ham, 2012).

Sustainability can be seen as a fundamental requirement for countries attempting to develop their tourism industry. In the process of developing a tourism product, planners must ensure harmony with the local environment. Sustainability needs to evolve through effective planning with clear guidelines on the breadth and depth of the development. This goal can be achieved by educating and training people involved with tourism and by the actions of governments and organizations in sponsoring initiatives that address the relationship between tourism and the environment (Meler & Ham, 2012).

Tourism sustainability and satisfaction on Madeira Island is a hot topic to maintain and promote the destination. During the 11th international Tourism Congress in 2019, the Life Eco Compatível project was presented to maintain and transmit important information for managing sites from the Natura 2000 network. With this Project, visitors were able to answer surveys to keep track of the number of people visiting protected places. This process allows us to establish the profile of the tourists and finally assess their level of satisfaction. To do so, in 2014, surveys were administered to tourists visiting the most visited sites in Madeira (CiTUR, 2019).

With the title “Communicating for socio-economic sustainability, human usufruct and biodiversity in Natura 2000 sites in the Madeira archipelago” and the acronym “ECO COMPATÍVEL”, this project was proposed by the Madeira Natural Park Service (SPNM) – Regional Secretariat Environment and Natural Resources, in partnership with the Portuguese Society for the Study of Birds (SPEA). The LIFE + Information and Communication program co-financed the project – a financial instrument of the European Community to support the European ecological network “Natura 2000 Network”.

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Figure 1. Logo of the Project.



Source: [<https://ifcn.madeira.gov.pt/biodiversidade/projetos/life-eco-compativel>], as available at 03/12/2022.

The objectives of this project were: a) to make economic and traditional activities compatible with biodiversity in Natura 2000 Network sites; b) to adopt appropriate behaviors for sustainable development and; c) to increase social involvement in nature conservation.

During the application of this project, it was possible to conduct some forums to raise awareness. The question asked to the audience for their reflection was: “Do you know the impacts of your activity on the biodiversity of protected sites?”.

Ultimately, dissemination and discussion forums were promoted to a specific target audience. The audiences were populations from coastal areas assimilated with professional and recreational fishing and rural populations economically related to agriculture and entities adhering to these activities. Those forums were a way to educate the population about their importance in various topics related to eco-friendly agriculture, the importance of indigenous species, and even how to contact the proper entities for specific cases.

Also, forums were promoted for local people in different parishes within the project. During these forums, it was possible to compete in small competitions aiming to form bonds between the communities. This initiative used decks of cards and the winning teams would get a ceramic mug as a prize. Contacts were made with local social bodies to establish partnerships for the organization of eco cards championships. It was counted in a total of 13 actions involving around 376 participants (IFCN, 2022).

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Figure 2. Forums for the local people.



Source: [<https://ifcn.madeira.gov.pt/biodiversidade/projetos/life-eco-compativel>], available at 03/12/2022.

An in-site campaign to protected areas was conducted for tourists and visitors. At Natura 2000 Network, 96 actions were carried out at the entrance areas involving 12,415 visitors.

Focused on specific pieces of information, different promotional materials were distributed: 27,500 garbage bags, 10,000 pocket ashtrays, and 17,000 wristbands.

A total of 51,701 online accesses were registered by the interactive multimedia kiosks: 26 821 accesses at the nun-da-Madeira reception center, 2 250 accesses at the terminal at Desertas Islands, 11,430 accesses at the Information Center of the Madeira Natural Park Service, 11 210 accesses at the reception center at Ponta de São Lourenço. Also, a campaign aimed at the protected areas was implemented for visitors of the Natural Reserve of Ilhas Desertas, the Natural Reserves of Garajau/Pináculo, Massif Montanhoso, Laurissilva da Madeira, and the Protected Area of Ponta de São Lourenço sites of the Natura 2000 Network.

It was created among 8,000 promotional material kits and around 70 panels were distributed, consisting of stickers, wrist straps, eco-ashtrays, and/or garbage bags. Through the direct action of the executive team or stakeholders, 136 actions were developed, which directly involved a total of 9,137 participants.

Figure 3. Information provided to visitors



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Source: [<https://ifcn.madeira.gov.pt/biodiversidade/projetos/life-eco-compativel>], available at 03/12/2022.

Marketing approaches, with emphasis on non-profit and social marketing, are key within entities that develop projects that have a strong involvement with the community (Kotler & Lee, 2008). The study of consumer behavior is fundamental to obtaining specific information to better develop projects that encourage changes in behavior (more responsible behavior) and better communicate with different target audiences (Hall, 2014; Kotler & Lee, 2008). Marketing approaches can make the performance of projects more effective in terms of changing behaviors, more sustainable, and help to better align marketing communication with projects' mission and targets' profiles (Sha & George, 2020).

3. QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

In the following section, we will present a few questions that help to reflect on the responsible marketing management approach to the project.

Question 1. - What was the impact of these campaigns on local people?

From our point of view, the main impact of this project on the local population was limited to the fact that they felt part of the governing mechanism, of the solutions to the problems they had to deal with daily. The questionnaires applied contributed to measures being taken and implemented to create a friendly interaction between residents, farmers, fishermen, traders, and tourists.

Question 2. - How open were the tourists to the campaigns done in specific areas and about specific subjects?

According to the statistics made available in the project, it can be seen that there was openness among the part of visitors, with more than 10,000 people being approached. More than 17,000 wristbands were also distributed to participants in the campaigns carried out. Also, it was registered around 27,000 visitors to one of the centers but in all the centers it was counted as a total of around 50,000 visitors. Finally, it was counted around 11,500 visitors went to the Information Center of the Natural Parque which shows some awareness and concern from the tourists.

Question 3. - How much did this project contribute to the tourists' awareness and the local people's acceptance?

The project contributed in a very positive way to increasing awareness of the target audience because with this project it was possible to develop a manual of good practices for the different species, informing what to do when faced with endemic species. In one way or another, it leveraged the availability of information that was previously difficult to access. With this project, it was possible to be able to update the information on the species that live in Madeira making it easier to understand and collect important data.

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4. CONCLUSIONS

The main objective of this case was to describe the Life Ecopatible project and its managerial and marketing responsible approach. Effective planning makes it possible to combine tourism with the local habitants. There are several examples of when this does not happen, it can generate conflicts between tourists and residents. Taking Barcelona as an example, it was the target of several protests against tourists. A study conducted by Hughes (2018) examined the phenomenon of anti-tourism protests in 2017. It was suggested that the problem surged because the local needs were not met, which caused these protests. Finally, Barcelona was not the only one affected by these riots; some neighboring cities also felt the effect of the protests (Hughes, 2018).

With this project, it was possible to educate and inform the locals through various workshops and forums about the importance of their natural heritage. At the same time, it helps to reflect on how the community can coexist with tourism. Also, it allowed informing tourists at key places about the importance of the various species of fauna and flora, so that they can appreciate these natural attractions and behave accordingly.

Finally, the project helps to promote sustainable tourism with green marking techniques and, above all, tries to maintain a healthy relationship between tourists and residents. According to a study on planning in tourism, it is important to pay special attention to destinations with very fast growth, as this can disrupt a region's socio-cultural balance (Martins, 2018).

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